(b) if so, the estimated requirement and availability of nurses in the country as on date; and

(c) what steps have been taken or proposed to be taken to augment the strength of nurses and to make the profession more attractive during the past three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI): (a) and (b) Health Manpower Planning and Production Committee has estimated shortage of 6.90 lakh nurses by the year 2000. There are 5.42 lakh nurses registered in state Nursing Councils upto December, 1995.

(c)(i) Ten new schools of nursing have been sanctioned during the years 1994-95 and 1995-96.

(ii) 30 schools/colleges of nursing have been strengthened to improve the quality of nursing education during the last three years.

Agricultural Credit Card Scheme

1825. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Public Sector Banks have introduced the Agricultural Credit Card for farmers with good track record in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) how many farmers have been given such Credit Cards in the State of Gujarat on date;

(d) whether the Credit Card scheme has been introduced in all the districts of Gujarat by the Banks; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor and by when all the districts are likely to be covered by the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (e) Information is being collected and, to the extent available, will be laid on the Table of the House.

विदेशी ऋण की राशि

1826. **श्री राम जेठमलानी:** क्या वित्त मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि आठवीं पंचवर्षीय योजना के पहले वर्ष के दौरान विदेशी ऋण की राशि इस समय इसकी राशि की तुलना में कम थी;

(ख) यदि हां, तो उस समय यह राशि कितनी थी; और

(ग) विदेशी ऋण पर दी जाने वाली ब्याज की राशि का प्रतिशत उस वर्ष और वर्तमान वर्ष के दौरान देश के सकल घरेलू उत्पाद के हिसाब से कितना-कितना था?

वित्त मंत्री (श्री पी० चिदम्बरम): (क) और (ख) जी, हां। 31 मार्च, 1992 को बकाया कुल विदेशी ऋण 85.29 बिलियन अमरीकी डॉलर था जबकि इसकी तुलना में 31 मार्च, 1996 को यह 92.66 बिलियन अमरीकी डॉलर था।

(ग) वर्ष 1992-93 और 1995-96 के दौरान विदेशी ऋण पर अदा किया गया ब्याज स०घ०उ० का क्रमशः 1.5 प्रतिशत और 1.3 प्रतिशत बैठता है।

Shifting of P.F. Money to Private Sector/ MNCs

1827. SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any decision to shift the provident fund money lying with State securities to see private sector and MNC companies;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the private and MNC companies indentified for this purpose;

(c) whether it is a fact that there has been opposition from various trade unions for such a move; and

(d) if so, the present stand of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No, Sir.